

UWGB Seeking Radio Station

By MIKE BLECHA
Press-Gazette Staff Writer

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is reviewing an application from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay to operate a 3,000-watt campus-oriented FM radio station.

The proposed noncommercial station will begin broadcasting Oct. 15 if FCC approval is granted. Its backers say it will complement the state educational radio network, but not compete with commercial FM stations.

The station application has already been approved by the UW Board of Regents, the state Educational Communications Board and its radio committee.

The application was submitted July 5, but it wasn't until this week that the FCC informed UWGB that it was being accepted for review.

The agency will now allow a 60- to 90-day period to study the application and invite public reaction. Comments should be sent to the FCC in Washington, D.C.

Thus far there has been little public reaction to the

proposed station, possibly because UWGB has not publicized the fact it was preparing an application.

Although university officials feel the station would be in the public interest, one foe has already arisen. Sen. Reuben LaFave of Oconto, who in the past has been viewed as a "friend" of UWGB, has been attempting to stir negative reaction.

Meanwhile, UWGB officials are proceeding steadily with

plans for the station. A budget has been drawn up, equipment is being purchased, student volunteers have been recruited and an operations manager is being sought.

The station's antenna will be located atop the Library-Learning Center, while a soundproof broadcasting studio will be built in the Instructional Services building.

The station will have a limited range, like most of the 10 other FM stations at UW sys-

tem campuses. Its first-year budget calls for expenditures of \$32,000, although \$12,000 is for purchase of needed equipment.

The application tendered to the FCC says the station "will provide an outlet for campus musical and dramatic presentations . . . (and) will establish a needed communication link between the campus and community."

Also included on the station's proposed format are

credit courses, commentary and news spiced with a "campus perspective." It will also serve as a "training laboratory" for mass communications students, who will be able to earn graduation credits for their work.

The objectives of the station and its background were outlined recently in an interview with Dr. Werner Prange, dean of instructional services at UWGB, and Joseph Gaunt, educational communications supervisor. Both have been key men in the work behind the station application.

Prange said he is optimistic that the application will be approved, "assuming there is no adverse comment (to the FCC) or that the adverse comment will not create a roadblock."

Gaunt, who has kept a close eye on similar applications to the FCC, said the "technical objections, in our estimation, do not exist."

The UWGB officials said the station will not compete with the two commercial FM stations in Green Bay, WBAY and WDLZ because it will offer as its perspective the university campus.

As each of the two commercial FM stations has its own format, Gaunt said the campus station "will attempt to win a new audience and not attempt to take listeners away. We will attempt to offer types of music and programming that are completely different."

The budget includes \$12,000 for an operations manager who will be hired by Sept. 1. Thus far, 54 applications have been received.

Other costs include the salary of a portion of the salary of a mass communications professor who will supervise the academic functions of the station and the purchase of equipment, such as turntables, microphones and tape recorders. The university already has obtained the use of a state-owned transmitter.

Following state Education Communications Board regulations, the station will have a limit of 3,000 watts. Although the ECB allows an antenna of 300 feet, UWGB's will be 114 feet. The length of the antenna itself will only be 29 feet, with the rest of the antenna height coming from the building on which it will be mounted.

FM radio stations at other UW campuses range in strength from 72,000 watts at Madison to 10 watts at Oshkosh and several other schools.

The UWGB station will effectively reach an area bounded on the east by New Franken, on the south by the town of De Pere, on the west by Ashwaubenon and Hobart and on the north by Little Saumico.

Critics of the station apply
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UWGB Applying For Radio Station

station, including LaFave, have said UWGB should make greater use of the state educational radio network instead of seeking a station of its own.

A state radio system tower, with a wattage of 50,000, is located on Scraps Hill near De Pere.

But Prange said the state network, which originates in Madison, carries pre-programming of state and national interest and not of a regional nature. The station has approximately two minutes per broadcast day originating in Green Bay. They consist of weather reports.

Programs which UWGB might attempt to start onto the state network would have to be carried to other outlets around the state. Other areas generally would not be interested in what's going on at UWGB, Prange said.

The UWGB station is applying for the frequency (82.5 on the FM dial) previously utilized by the Spring outlet of the state network. That frequency became available in January when the state outlets at Spring and Chilton were consolidated and moved to Scraps Hill.

The university first sought a license in May, but the application was refused several days later with two questions.

The FCC apparently was not aware that the Spring station had been shut down and it wanted to know why UWGB was applying for the same frequency as an existing station. That question, Prange said, was easily answered.

The second question dealt with the possibility of frequency interference with a Southwestern-Twin Rivers FM station.

Gault said the FCC just took into consideration the distance between the two areas, but was not aware of the to-

porosity of the area. The Niagara Escarpment located just south of UWGB effectively blocks any transmission interference, Gault said.

When UWGB was founded years ago, thought was given to having a campus radio station. The idea was dormant until last fall when about 40 mass communications students urged the faculty and administration to seek a station.

This student group, Prange said, will serve as the "core" of student volunteers working at the station. Students will become involved in news, music and other aspects of the station but "will be under constant supervision," Prange said.

Prange emphasized that continuing student involvement is key to the station's success. "It must be wholly sustained (by student involvement)," he said.

The university will subscribe to the Associated Press radio wire at a cost of \$40 a week. News will be put into a university perspective and students will be invited to report on news events.

Local governmental meetings and live fire alarm programs will be carried periodically.

But, Prange said, the operations manager and customer relations personnel will have control over what is broadcast. "No one can go on the air and read the news," he said.

Because of UWGB's emphasis on music and live entertainment, many of the proposed programs will have an entertainment focus, Prange said. Music programming will include bluegrass, classical, ethnic, folk, jazz, progressive rock, blues, boogie, vintage rock, experimental and country rock.

During its first year of operation the station is expected to broadcast Monday through Saturday from 3:30 p.m. until midnight (until 1 a.m. on Friday and Saturday).

The Press-Gazette has obtained a copy of a letter Sen. LaFave sent June 28 to area legislators. In the letter, LaFave said the state already has the radio station in the Green Bay area (at Scraps Hill) and "two radio stations in the same area is a ridiculous waste of the taxpayer's money."

LaFave contends that UWGB can use the state radio station at will — an opinion that university officials disagree with — and that the proposed station would be an "overencroachment" on free enterprise.

In the letter, LaFave urged legislators to write a letter UW President John Weaver in Madison objecting to the station and to make a "personal radio announcement" opposing it.

According to LaFave's letter two days later, UWGB sent memorandums to area legislators explaining the application.

The memorandum challenges the charge that the station poses a threat to commercial broadcast operators. It says further that the station was "student-initiated, relatively inexpensive to operate and financed in part by student fees."

UWGB's response, the memorandum states, is to "offer residents of this area the same opportunities for education and exposure as is now afforded to the region served by the 18 other UW campuses which operate radio stations."

Further explaining the school's position, Chancellor Edward Weeber said additional state funds are being sought to finance the station. The money comes from cutting back certain services to the UWGB body, he said.

Weeber also noted that LaFave "has never raised the question about the station." But he said he hoped to meet with LaFave soon to discuss the application.



Erecting Antenna — Technicians assemble the radio antenna for WGBW, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay's new FM station. The antenna is being placed atop the Library-Learning Center.

(Tom Knuth Photo)

Radio Station WGBW Goes on the Air Today

Radio station WGBW begins broadcasting today.

It is on 91.5 on the FM dial.

Located at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and run chiefly by student volunteers, the noncommercial station has as its theme "alternative radio."

Its music offerings will be varied — classical, folk, and bluegrass, international, jazz, blues, boogie and progressive, vintage, experimental and country rock.

Broadcasting days will be 4 p.m. to midnight Monday through Thursday and 4 p.m. until 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday.

Beginning today at 4:05 and on successive Mondays for a number of weeks, WGBW will present a three-hour program sampler, according to Annabelle Hitchcock, operations manager of the station and UWGB faculty member.

Fifteen-minute samplings of various types of music the

uwgb



Logo of WGBW Radio

station plans to offer will be broadcast to acquaint listeners to the station.

Programming plans on the other days call for the station to present a three-hour segment of classical music following a five-minute news broadcast at 4 p.m.

From 7 until 8 will be a news broadcast. The station will cover state, national and international news and features using United Press International sources, and it will also cover the local scene.

Another, shorter news broadcast is scheduled for 10 p.m. daily. Beginning nightly at 8 p.m., the station will present a mixture of music.

Among planned features will be a brief mystery serial presented at the 10 p.m. news. Called "The Fourth Tower of Inverness," the serial will begin in mid-September. Aside from nightly broadcasts, the serial will be run full in round-up form on Saturdays.

With 3,000 watts of power, WGBW will have a broadcast

radius of about 40 miles, making it one of the strongest of the UW system stations.

Except for Miss Hitchcock and the chief engineer, the station will be staffed by student volunteers. About 50 are expected to participate.

The Federal Communications Commission granted the station a construction permit last Oct. 4. The 91.5 frequency was previously occupied by the former Suring outlet of the state educational radio network.

The station application was first approved by the UW Board of Regents, the state Educational Communications Board and the ECB radio committee.



Warren Gerds

Critic-at-Large

More will be able to tune in WGBW

■ It will broadcast farther while using less power

The future is looking up for WGBW.

The Wisconsin Public Radio station has gotten the go-ahead to triple its coverage area.

WGBW (91.5 FM) broadcasts mostly talk and informational programming. The other public station, WPNE (89.3 FM), broadcasts mostly music.

WGBW's studios will remain at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, but its antenna and transmitter are moving from the campus to WAPL's tower site southeast of De Pere.

WGBW will gain coverage despite a cut in power from 3,000 to 700 watts.

"What's wrong here?" kids Jack Mitchell, director of Wisconsin Public Radio. "The height is what does it."

The antenna is rising from 115 to 740 feet. In broadcasting, the higher the antenna, the greater the broadcast radius.

The accompanying map shows how radio signals don't always cover a smooth circle. The kidney shape of the WPNE signal is a combination of terrain and design of the antenna, Mitchell says.

Work on upgrading the WGBW signal is to take until late May.

The station will be off the air for a few days when the transmitter is moved. It's a big job.

"It's literally like moving houses," Mitchell says. "You think moving a piano is tough . . ."

The cost of the improvement is nearly \$50,000, Mitchell says.

In a separate project, WGBW's production facilities will be remodeled.

The original equipment from the 1970s is "desperately out of date and wearing out," Mitchell says.

"It's like any other electronic equipment. It has a limited life span."

Next year, WPNE will get a new antenna and line. "It won't increase our coverage," Mitchell says.

"It should just clean up the signal and give us another 20 years of life."

Gerds writes about radio and television for the Press-Gazette.



Press-Gazette graphic

Upgrade: The range of public radio station WGBW will increase but still be smaller than companion WPNE.

Station launch delayed

Stronger successor to WGBW-FM may hit the air this fall

WHID-FM — the successor to public radio station WGBW-FM — has run into delays and won't arrive on the air for another six months.

"We had hoped for a summertime launch, and then it looked like September and now it looks like a little later in the fall," says Jack Mitchell, director of Wisconsin Public Radio. "But I would say before the snow flies. Famous last words."

Mitchell says that because the launch would come more than a year after it was originally intended.

WHID will replace WGBW as the Wisconsin Ideas Network station in Green Bay.

WHID will be more powerful and cover more area with its talk and information offerings.

The station will be heard at 88.1 on the FM dial, rather than WGBW's 91.5.

Wisconsin Public Radio will run WHID and WGBW simultaneously for a while, then shut off WGBW and put its frequency up for sale.

The frequency cannot be sold to a commercial broadcaster because it is in the area of the radio band reserved for non-commercial use. It could be sold to a school, a religious organization or any other organization that chooses to run a station as not-for-profit.

The delays for WHID are due to unforeseen complications in the construction permit. Changes have been applied for with the Federal Communications Commission. Granting approval always takes time.

"But we expect that will happen pretty routinely and that we'll have the go-ahead in early summer and we'll have a few months to build the station," Mitchell says.

The estimated cost is \$163,200 for a transmitter, antenna, transmission line, test and remote control equipment.

WHID will reach farther into the Fox River Valley and southern Door County than WGBW, and be heard in areas where WGBW isn't — portions of Oconto, Shawano and Waupaca counties.

Despite the delays, WHID "is going to happen," Mitchell assures.

Wisconsin Public Radio's other local station, WPNE, 89.3 FM, will continue as the classical music outlet.



Warren Gerds



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The WGBW alternative: when college students ruled the airwaves

Student-run radio station WGBW-FM 91.5 was as much a fixture of UW-Green Bay's early years as purple shag carpeting and January interim.

WGBW was one of the campus and community's most popular venues for progressive music, news, entertainment and expression. It also featured live coverage of Phoenix athletics.

The station debuted in 1974 with a 30-mile signal and a goal to be "alternative radio." Glen Slaats, station manager since 1979, recalled popular programs such as the late Vernon Taylor's "VT, the Fat Cat from Philly." Listeners came to know D.J.s "Johnny Dread" and "Taste O' Honey" like members of their family. Students hosted a popular, high-profile bluegrass show called "Cumberland Ramblers," featuring music and live interviews with big-time stars.

"In reality, it's one of the main reasons I chose UWGB," says the animated and outgoing Steve Brenzel, a Green Bay radio and TV personality better known as "Ned the Dead." "I always knew I wanted a radio career. At other schools, you couldn't get on the air as a freshman. There is no way I'd be doing what I'm doing now if it wasn't for WGBW. I lived to be on that station. The day I went on-air, I called home as proud as I've ever been of anything in my entire life."

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By the mid-1980s the station, not directly supported by an academic unit, was seen more as luxury than necessity. In 1986 WGBW entered an agreement in which Wisconsin Public Radio would provide daytime content, with student shows at night. Two years later, with rising costs arguing against full-power student radio, the University investigated a total transfer to WPR.

That news upset some student listeners and staff. Days before the deal was to be complete, two student D.J.s violated station rules and used inappropriate language while drinking alcohol in the broadcast booth in what they said was a protest. The incident sealed WGBW's fate and brought a bitter ending to what had been, through the years, a sweet adventure.

"That was a sad day," Brenzel recalls. "It took away a wonderful learning tool, and an opportunity to try new things... real world, but protected. That's where you learn to be yourself."

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Broadcasting creativity 101

WGBW gave students — whether communications majors or not - a prime creative outlet.

UWGB alumnus Steve "Ned the Dead" Brenzel &3151; a morning talk show host on Green Bay radio station "The Eagle" 106.7-FM &3151; honed his craft at WGBW.

Mike Steavpack, who went on to work with TV's Fox Sports, was doing sports talk radio (see graphic this page) years before the format really took off.

In the mid-'80s, two ambitious students, Joe Smrekar and Dave Spangler, and alumnus Jeff Schmidbauer, put together a show called "Rock 'n' Roll Chronology," scrounging for every single No. 1 pop hit of the week, 1955-1985.

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Radio station powered up as 1-watt, bootleg 'signal'

In retrospect, more than 30 years later, it's okay to admit to a questionable start if the motives were noble. Isn't it? Rick Conn '75, WGBW's first student manager, has come clean. Conn says student broadcasts were hitting the air well before WGBW was official and University sanctioned.

A handful of students at the Bay Apartments (now Residence Life) would experiment from time to time via secret broadcasts with reel-to-reel tape machines and record players, using the power outlets to carry a 1-watt transmitter signal through the apartments. Anyone plugging a radio into the wall outlet could pick up the signal. As interest (and risk of being caught) increased, the students decided to make a formal request for a student-run campus station.

With the support of the late Dick Christie, director of student life programs, students called hundreds of stations for old equipment, and 25 of them traveled to Chicago to take the test for an FCC broadcast license. W. Werner Prange, the director of instructional resources, caught wind of the student-forged plans and called a meeting of the would-be broadcasters. "Halfway through he told us he had heard enough," Conn recalled. "We thought we had lost our battle. But two weeks later he granted our request."

The University would build a station, offer technical support staff, hire a professional station manager and have ultimate oversight. Staffing and programming would be student managed. The result was a state-of-the-art soundproof studio, brand-new equipment including a 3,000-watt transmitter and broadcasts reaching beyond Brown County. It was, says Conn, a wonderful partnership.

"It was a great marriage of all interested parties," Conn says. "It gave students an outlet. At a time when the University didn't have much student life, it created a purpose."

Now a senior executive and project manager for Procter & Gamble, and a former board member of UW-Green Bay's Founders Association, Conn credits his post-college success, in great part, to WGBW's pioneering times. "I learned about leadership in those days," he says. "In my 28 years with the same company, many of my leadership examples draw from those early experiences. Many people took a great risk for us."

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Hopes today ride on the Internet

Current campus radio station WFPR is gaining momentum to be more than an in-house and campus-only station.

The "station," in actuality, is composed of a group of students broadcasting from Studio Arts Room 260 to the University Union and Residence Life with little more than two CD players, two or three microphones and two mixers.

With an official Web site in the works &3151; and an opportunity to broadcast over the Internet that comes with it — the more than 35 active members will have an outlet to the rest of the world. Student managers say the Web site is "in the works." Look to future "Insides" for more information.



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An archive of alumni notes is available online at www.uwgb.edu/alumni/. Check the Website often for the latest news on your fellow graduates.

